

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A20

THE WASHINGTON POST
18 November 1981

Libyan Identifies Tafoya as His Assailant

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Special to The Washington Post

FORT COLLINS, Colo., Nov. 17 — A leader of Libyan dissidents in the United States today identified former Green Beret Eugene Tafoya as the man who shot him twice in the head last year in what prosecutors claim was an attempted assassination directed by the regime of Col. Muammar Qaddafi.

The defense says the shooting occurred when Tafoya went to the apartment of Faisal Zagallai to deliver a warning from the Central Intelligence Agency.

Zagallai, 35, testified Monday and today at the trial of Tafoya, a former member of the U.S. Army Special Forces, who is charged with attempted murder and conspiracy to murder.

Zagallai said he and his wife, Farida, both from wealthy and politically prominent Libyan families, have lived in Fort Collins for 10 years while studying at Colorado State University, initially on scholarships provided by the Qaddafi regime.

Zagallai said he supported Qaddafi when he first took power in 1969. But he later moved into opposition to the regime, he said, and in 1973 helped organize a student conference in Libya. "After that, things got hot," he testified. He said six students were hanged by the regime after the conference because of their opposition to Qaddafi.

Zagallai said he participated in taking over the Libyan Embassy in the United States in 1976 and helped organize demonstrations against Qaddafi in 1977. In 1979, he said, he lost his scholarship.

In February, 1980, Qaddafi ordered all Libyan students to return or face execution, and an FBI agent testified last week that the bureau warned Zagallai his life might be in danger. Zagallai said he bought a pistol to protect himself.

On Oct. 13, 1980, Zagallai testified, he received a call from a woman offering to set up a job interview with a recruiter for U.S. companies doing business in the Near East. Zagallai said he tucked the pistol under the cushion of a couch before the recruiter arrived at his apartment the following evening.

After 10 to 15 minutes of awkward conversation, Zagallai said, the man "mumbled something," attempted to hit him, then pulled a gun and fired, hitting Zagallai in the face. The man shot Zagallai again in the head and fled the apartment, the Libyan testified.

In often acrimonious cross-examination, Zagallai

admitted he "probably" cocked his own gun, putting a bullet in the chamber. But he insisted he never fired his weapon, despite earlier testimony by three witnesses who thought they heard three rather than two shots.

Tafoya does not deny that he was present at Zagallai's apartment, but the defense contends Tafoya did not go there with the intent to kill Zagallai and shot him in self-defense only after Zagallai pulled his own weapon from beneath the cushion and tried to grab Tafoya's gun.

In his opening statement to the jury, Tafoya's attorney, Walter Gerash, said Tafoya went to Zagallai's apartment to warn him to stop making statements "endangering détente between Egypt and Israel." Gerash said Tafoya had received instructions from a man he believed to be a CIA agent in London to deliver a warning to Zagallai.

The CIA has denied Tafoya has worked for it. Also, testifying yesterday was former Green Beret Tulley Francis Strong, who said he was a "very good friend" of Tafoya. Strong described Tafoya as a confident and patriotic soldier and testified that Tafoya had received a letter from the CIA, inviting him to apply for a job just before his retirement from the Army in 1975.